

# Street

8A(9)(F)

MONDAY, MAY 16, 1994

## STREET BEATS

### DIG

— Dig



Just when you thought the L.A. scene had had its last big quake, Dig has released an album that packs such a punch that even the Midwest feels the shake. "Dig," their self-titled album, released by Wasteland Records, is the follow-up to their January '93 debut EP, "Runt," which soared to the top of the alternative college charts.

Like the squishy head cover of their CD jacket, Dig's latest effort is one juicy, rich and creamy piece. The quintet, whose average age is 24.5, has an unusual three-guitar (Scott Hackwith, Jon Morris, Johnny Cornwell) approach that creates a dense but moody atmosphere for the listener. It would seem that having producer Dave Jerden (Alice in Chains, Jane's Addiction) on board ensured a successful full-length effort.

Not quite as angular rhythmically as Jane's Addiction, two-year-old Dig relies on more of a chorale mode. Smoothing syntax of verbal catchiness are their forte.

Tracks, such as "Believe" and "I'll Stay High," that confront the challenges of adulthood best exemplify their sound. In fact, this enables the band to be more accessible than some of its predecessors.

Track one requires parental discretion where one song evolved from a humorous story about singer guitarist Hackwith's girlfriend complaining that he never wrote a song about her. Well, she got her wish — "Layla" it ain't, but intense and honest it is.

As a whole, Dig's latest is a worthy effort. Complete with samples of beer-cup toasts and children's laughter, Dig brings you into an intimate living room party.

I guess you could say that Dig doesn't sacrifice song structure for momentary melodrama. Their spontaneous explosions within their songs are akin to high-speed chases where cars crash and magically regenerate.

If a receptive ear is related to one's perception, then one thing is certain, you either dig Dig or you don't.

— Mark Killian Simich

### "Trace"

— Died Pretty



Less than 10 years after the group's inception in 1983, the Australian quintet Died Pretty very nearly saw its name become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

International touring and critical acclaim throughout the mid-late '80s brought the band to the brink of mass popularity, only to have distribution problems in 1991 all but pull the plug on its popularity. But Died Pretty persevered, signing with Columbia Records and releasing its latest effort, "Trace," in 1993.

"Trace" is a collection of power-pop and brooding ballads that brings to mind a melancholy Rhythm Corps with more personal concerns than political opinions. The group is capable of social commentary, however, as demonstrated in the song "The Rivers" and the ethereal "Dreamaway," featuring a delightfully dissonant piano reminiscent of Bowie's "Alladin Sane."

"Trace" suffers a bit of repetition. Some of the songs are so similar as to be nearly indistinguishable, and "Til We Get It Right" is practically one continuous chorus.

Standouts on the disk include the aforementioned "The Rivers" and "Dreamaway," as well as a mature ballad called "A State of Graceful Mourning."

Died Pretty is good at what it seeks to do, and "Trace" is a well produced and arranged disk. The question is: Will this sound be as marketable in the '90s as it was in the '80s now that rock is looking forward to the post-Grunge Age?

— Matthew Delezanne

### "California Dreaming"

— various artists



Dance music. Just when you thought you heard it all — disco, techno, hip-hop, house, acid — a simple California record company releases a taste of the state's best beats, steps, dips and grinds.

"California Dreaming" (Full Frequency Range Recording, 1993) is a leap into dream land taking the idea of dance music a step beyond getting funky to a more musically sensitive experience.

The 10-track compilation is packed with glossy tracks not normally mentioned on conventional dance releases. Granted the only binding substance each artist has is the fact that each is based in the only state where dreams seem to become reality, but this time with a twist of synthetic impulses.

But who cares. "Dreaming" bills itself as a documentation of "vibrant landscapes of dance music" and (are you ready for this) "The ultimate cyber-hip ex-

See DREAMING, 9A

## Diversity key to duo's success

■ "In your face" and "bluesy" aptly describe the band Urban Voodoo Juice. "Prolific" describes John R. Selenis and M.E. Jonson, the driving force behind the group, who write such diverse songs that they had to start two other bands.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO  
STAFF WRITER



Urban Voodoo Juice has been placed in a myriad of genres including "blues," "rhythm and blues" as well as "alternative."

To members of the band that's not as disturbing as being written off as just another band with a "pretty woman singer."

"We're not about pretty music... or the cute girl thing," said vocalist M.E. Jonson, who shaved her head and died her hair blonde in retaliation to these comments. "We really don't want to write music that suggests any inherent gender weakness in that there's a lot of rules for women in the music industry of which I don't adhere to any," she added.

"Conventional" isn't a word that can easily be equated with Urban Voodoo Juice. Instead, Jonson and guitarist John R. Selenis describe the band as having a "schizophrenic" personality.

I think we're schizophrenic... we have some serious mental instabilities (musically)," Jonson said.

During their "plugged-in" shows Urban Voodoo Juice is loud and in your face. Acoustic shows show the bluesier, more roots rock side of the band.

"It feeds and fosters a more aggressive energy that I don't get to experience acoustically," she said about her electric sets.

"It's a dual personality type of thing. However, what makes our acoustic show really important is it has a lot of energy. It's really different than your typical acoustic show with two folkies with an acoustic guitar."

The array of influences that the four members bring into Urban Voodoo Juice, which was a multi-award winner at the 1993 Detroit Music



SHYAN ANGL

"In your face": Urban Voodoo Juice is the main project for John R. Selenis and M.E. Jonson, at far right. However, the diversity of their writing has spawned two off-shoot bands — Applebutter Music and Roothbox. Urban Voodoo Juice is rounded out by bassist Paul Randolph and drummer Mike Racette.

Awards, is attributed, in part, to their personality disorder. Jonson's experience is with country, gospel and bluegrass swing bands. Bassist Paul Randolph is an established jazz musician who has played with Josh White Jr., Robert Penn and Parliament-Funkadelic. Drummer Mike Racette performed within the Los Angeles jazz circuit. A veteran of trash metal bands, soft-spoken guitarist Selenis also performed with the Afro-Music Society. The stint with the society proved to be educational in its own right.

"It was a real eye-opener after doing some of those prison shows. It really gave me (a lesson in) cultural awareness... We saw people really starving for music."

A constant in the band is Jonson and Selenis' dedication to writing lyrics that mean something and are accessible to most socio-economic classes. For example, in the drum-heavy "Peacemaker," Jonson tackles urban violence. "I don't believe in violence. I won't live my life in fear. I'm going to die young in the corridor, stranded way down here."

"People like to hear songs that at

least make an attempt to say something," Jonson explained. "It's part of our addiction to music."

People are always trying to save the world. You can't save the world, but you can save pieces of it," she said.

Sometimes the songs that the duo write don't fit in with the format of Urban Voodoo Juice, however. With that in mind, the duo, who pen and debut their songs under the name Applebutter Music, started an offshoot of Urban Voodoo Juice called Roothbox.

"A lot of it is that M.E. does so much writing and some of it doesn't fit in with UVJ," Selenis said.

"We debut all our material (as) Applebutter Music before it goes to any band. A lot of things get chucked that way," Jonson added with a laugh. "That's our best tool though."

After it receives the stamp of approval from the audience, the duo decides if it would fit best with Roothbox, Urban Voodoo Juice or with the acoustic Applebutter Music.

While Urban Voodoo Juice is rock-inspired funk, Jonson dubs the

four-week-old Roothbox "chicken-fried funk" because it has elements of traditional country mixed in with funk. (In this band, Selenis plays guitar and sings vocals, while Jonson takes on a rhythm guitar and vocal duties.) The line-up is rounded out with drummer Matt Stahl, harmonica player Eugene Clark, percussionist Saul Moore, and former Asian Love Pimp member Paul Lamb on bass.)

"Roothbox is a little more song-oriented. It's fun and funkier," Selenis said.

"It's a much simpler thing. It's easier for people to feel into it. It's great songs with really strong melodies. It's a more song-oriented project. You actually hear the songs and the words," Jonson said.

Roothbox performs with Teatjerk, the Jolly Ranchers and Bicycle on Thursday, May 19, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., Detroit, during a benefit for the Wayne State University student chapter of Amnesty International. Call (313) 832-2355 or (313) 577-3453 for more information.

## IN CONCERT

Items should be submitted two weeks in advance to: Christina Fuoco, 36251 Schenck Rd., Livonia, MI 48150, or by fax at (313) 591-7279.

**Monday, May 16**  
**THE WALKERS**  
With Zulu Spear at The Majestic, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (1983)  
(313) 963-7690

**Tuesday, May 17**  
**BROTHERS GUN**  
Blond Pk. 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)  
(313) 996-8555

**CLAY EMBARRAS**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (acoustic)  
(313) 763-8587

**Wednesday, May 18**  
**BLOWOFF**  
With The Outcasts at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (alternative pop)  
(810) 334-1999

**DOWNEY'S GROVE**  
Studio Lounge, 6921 Wayne Road, Westland. (rock)  
(313) 729-2540

**YUDU HIPPIES**  
With Special Dance at Blond Pk. 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)  
(313) 996-8555

**OWEN & CHARLES SCALES**  
Candy Dancer, 401 Depot St., Ann Arbor. (alt)  
(313) 769-0592

**HOMER HAN BELL**  
O.C. 29 S. Saginaw St., Pontiac. (blues)  
(810) 334-7401

**SLEEP CAPABLE**  
With Log, Dynamite and Head Injury at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (rock)  
(313) 832-2355

**THE WILD SHEEP ROADS**  
Lakeside Yacht Club, 37604 Ann Arbor. (rock, roots rock)  
(313) 501-1868

**Thursday, May 19**  
**GENERAL CLUSTERFUCK**  
With Grey Hovers at Griff's Grd., 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (alternative rock)  
(810) 334-5150

**LUCIE BLAKE TREMBLAY**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (acoustic)  
(313) 763-8587

**ROBERT PERIN**  
Perin's Teatjerk, Jolly Ranchers and Bicycle during an Amnesty International benefit at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (alternative rock)  
(313) 832-2355



**DANIEL STEPHEN HAZLEY**  
Espresso Thyme, 2434 Orchard Lake Road, Kearsburg, Harbor. (acoustic)  
(810) 662-8282

**WHITE TRASH**  
With Alan Valentine at The Ritz, 17580 Frayne, Roseville. (rock)  
(810) 778-6404

**DISCOWAVE**  
With Lure at 3-D, 1815 N. Main St., Royal Oak. (rock)  
(810) 589-3344

**TWO DEARMS FROM EARTH**  
Discrete, 18 N. Saginaw St., Pontiac. (rock)  
(810) 333-CAFE

**SIGMOID MATHS**  
With Tremorology and The Impediments at Blond Pk. 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (rock)  
(313) 996-8555

**TOOL**  
With Flaming Lips and Failure at the Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre, 10 Water St., Pontiac. (rock)  
(810) 335-4850

**Friday, May 20**  
**OPENURE**  
Classical music series aimed at those aged 20-40. DSO concert at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit, followed by post-concert party at Renaissance II Centro. (classical)  
(313) 833-3700

### Groovy: Infectious

Grooves, which features

Suicidal Tendencies vocalist

Michael Muir and

bassist Robert Trujillo,

plays Roseville's The

Ritz on Friday,

May 20.

Call (810)

778-6404.

**THE ALLIGATORS**  
Stan's Dugout, 3350 Auburn Road, Auburn Hills. (blues)  
(810) 652-6433

**EASTWEST BENEFIT**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (rock)  
(313) 832-2355

**CHISEL BROS. WITH THORNTON DAVIS**  
O.C. 29 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (rhythm and blues)  
(810) 334-7401

**INFECTIOUS GROOVES**  
With Succubus at The Ritz, 17580 Frayne, Roseville. (rock)  
(810) 778-6404

**DOONHEADS**  
With Twitch and The Dumps at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (alternative rock)  
(313) 831-8070

**JOHNNY COPELAND**  
The Majestic, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (rock)  
(313) 963-7680

**Saturday, May 21**

**BECKMAN HOWARD**  
With Rob Roy and Spunk at Magic Bag Theatre, 22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. (alternative rock)  
(810) 544-3030

**BLACK MALL**  
Blond Pk. 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)  
(313) 996-8555

**THE OWENS**  
With The Zellers at Griff's Grd., 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (rock)  
(810) 334-5150

**CHERRY WHEELER**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (acoustic)  
(313) 763-8587

**DETROIT BLUES BAND**  
Speakeasy, 31410 Ford Road, Garden City. (blues)  
(313) 425-7373

**ROBERT PERIN**  
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer Road, Dearborn. (blues)  
(313) 581-3650

**THE DOOGUENERS**  
Sports, 186 Maple, Wyandotte. (blues)  
(313) 285-5050

**HARMONICA BLAH AND BOBBY EAST**  
Carnegie House, 2400 Grand River, Detroit. (blues)  
(313) 535-3440

**THE BLAINS**  
With Aldous Huxley at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (blues)  
(313) 832-2355

**CHISEL BROS. WITH THORNTON DAVIS**  
O.C. 29 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (blues)  
(810) 334-7401

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